

Governmental Reorganiza- tion in Illinois

By

JOHN A. FAIRLIE

Director of the Efficiency and Economy Committee, State of Illinois



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GOVERNMENTAL REORGANIZATION IN ILLINOIS¹

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In its broad outlines the state government of Illinois resembles that of most of the American States—but with the most recent tendencies as yet only slightly developed. The present state constitution, adopted in 1870, illustrates the political ideas prevalent in the middle of the nineteenth century—the election of all classes of public officials, the disintegration of the executive branch of the government, and the distrust of the legislature, and the provisions of this constitution are stereotyped by an amending article under which alterations have proved almost impossible. There has, however, been an increasing development of administrative authorities, created by statute, and added one to another with almost no attempt at systematic organization. From 1909 to 1913, there were not less than 34 new state offices, boards and commissions established, and the total number of such executive agencies is now approximately 130.

Under the present arrangements, there is no correlation between related offices, and little or no effective supervision; there is no budget system and no adequate accounting system. As a result the public administration is inefficient and wasteful; it fails to furnish the general assembly with satisfactory advice on legislation; and there is no clearly defined responsibility for the conduct of public affairs; appropriations and expenditures have been rapidly increasing, the appropriations in 1913 for two years amounting to nearly \$38,000,000.

Passing over isolated and minor efforts, there are two distinct and important projects now actively before the state and the

¹ A paper read at the eleventh annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

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coming session of the general assembly involving extensive and fundamental changes in governmental organization. One is the definite series of proposals of an efficiency and economy committee, created at the last session of the general assembly, for the reorganization of state administration. The other is the proposition for a convention to revise the state constitution.

ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION

The efficiency and economy committee consists of four members of each house, and was organized to make a general investigation of the numerous state boards, commissions and bureaus established by statute, with a view to consolidating and reorganizing them so as to promote greater economy and efficiency. The report of this committee is now ready for submission to the general assembly; and it is my purpose here, to discuss briefly some of the methods of the committee, and the general principles of its proposals.

As a basis for its work the committee has had prepared a survey of the administrative authorities and services of the state, with comparisons of conditions in other states and countries. A series of reports on different groups of administrative agencies has been made—largely by members of the faculty of the University of Illinois—forming it is believed the most comprehensive study ever made of the organization, powers and duties of the executive administration of any state government. These will be published as appendices to the committee's report.

Following the submission and consideration of these reports, a series of tentative plans of reorganization were approved; and a preliminary report outlining the general scheme was published. These plans were then further discussed, at a series of public hearings held in Chicago and Springfield, with public officials, representatives of associations and other citizens, resulting in some modifications of the tentative plans. Later meetings of the committee have been given to formulating its report, and the consideration of bills to carry out the reorganization proposed.

As a result of this procedure, the plans recommended form a comprehensive and related series, covering the whole field of

state administration, as created and regulated by statute. These plans have been based on a detailed study of the existing authorities and their present powers and duties; and they thus present what may be called a "practical" program, rather than a purely ideal scheme of state organization and activities. This does not mean that the recommendations are limited to those which can be easily enacted into law at once. It means that the plans have been prepared with reference to existing conditions, and that they are adapted to prompt adoption and execution. No extensive changes have been proposed in the substantive law; although in some cases the existing legislation has been consolidated and simplified in the bills to be presented.

The plans presented propose the organization of the state administrative services into a series of ten principal executive departments, as follows:

Finance, education, charities and corrections, public works, labor and mining, agriculture, health, trade and commerce, military affairs and law. A few offices will remain outside of these departments, as the secretary of state, the civil service commission and the legislative reference bureau. So far as possible under the present constitution these departments will be under the control of officials appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the senate; and in each department will be organized the several bureaus and offices dealing with closely related public services.

Some variation in the organization of the several departments and the powers of the central authority has seemed better suited to existing conditions than a strictly identical system for all. Thus in some departments, as agriculture, labor and mining and law, there will be a single official at the head. In other cases, as in finance, education and charities and corrections, the general authority will be a board or commission. But the present confusing chaos of organization will be materially simplified. Single officials are recommended for distinctly executive work; and boards are proposed only for advisory, quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial functions. The number of boards will be largely reduced; and the boards proposed will be for the most part com-

posed either of unpaid members, or of members paid salaries for full time service. Boards whose members are paid for part time service, and provisions for the representation of more than one party are disapproved. Many of the existing boards will be abolished, merged with other authorities, or replaced by single officials.

Probably the most important part of the proposed plan is that for the department of finance. For this there is recommended a state finance commission, composed of a state comptroller (as chairman), a tax commissioner and a revenue commissioner, appointed by the governor and senate, with the elected auditor of public accounts and state treasurer *ex-officio*. The commission will have general supervision over the department, while each official will have important specific powers; and the department as a whole will deal with the assessment and collection of revenue, the preparation of a budget, and control over expenditures, forming a more comprehensive organization of finance administration than in any state of this country at the present time.

The plans of organization for the proposed departments will, it is believed, provide for an effective correlation and supervision of state administration, and for a comprehensive budget and system of accounts, which should greatly increase its efficiency, and bring about a direct saving in expenditures, estimated at almost a million dollars a year. The new administrative organization should also aid the general assembly in connection with legislative matters and should establish a responsible system of government in this state.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Among the serious obstacles to a thorough reorganization of state administration in Illinois, are the constitutional provisions for the election of a number of executive officers in addition to the governor; and a complete scheme of administrative reorganization will require the amendment of the state constitution. Several other changes in the state constitution have been

vigorously urged for several years, including an amendment on taxation, the initiative and referendum, the abolition of the system of cumulative voting for the house of representatives and woman suffrage. None of these proposals have, however, been submitted, partly because of a provision in the present constitution, prohibiting the amendment of more than one article of the constitution at a time, which has brought about a deadlock between the supporters of rival amendments. This in turn has led to proposals for an amendment of the amending article, which has added to the complexities of the situation.

A resolution to submit to the people the question of calling a convention to revise the state constitution was passed by the senate at the last session of the general assembly; but failed to pass the house of representatives. During the year 1914 there has been organized a constitutional convention league to urge the calling of a convention; and more than the required two-thirds of each house of the 1915 general assembly are said to be committed to submitting the question of calling a convention at the next general election.²

A considerable number of amendments to the constitution have been actively urged; and with the present restrictions on the adoption of amendments submitted by the general assembly, a convention seems the most effective method for securing these changes. At the same time it must be admitted that no definite program for a general revision of the constitution has thus far been presented. If a convention is to be held, there is need for a large amount of preliminary study of how the provisions of the present constitution work and of the numerous changes proposed in this and other States.

As a partial step toward meeting this need, there has been organized a committee from the law and political science faculties of the University of Illinois, the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, with others actively interested in public affairs. This "Universities Committee" has undertaken to

² A joint resolution to submit the question of calling a constitutional convention was again passed by the senate in March, 1915, but again failed to receive the required two-thirds vote in the house of representatives.

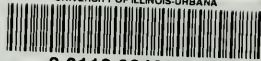
collect and digest the materials needed for the work of a state constitutional convention, and to discuss and analyze various proposals for constitutional provisions. Meetings have been held at intervals for about a year; and it is expected that these studies will be completed and the results published and made available for the general public and for a convention if it is called.

It may also be noted that the efficiency and economy committee in its report recommends that the general assembly provide for a comprehensive survey of state and local government, as a basis for future statutory and constitutional changes. Such a survey authorized and supported by the State, could do much to prepare the way for a more careful and scientific revision of the state constitution than has yet been undertaken.





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